

# HIDRADENITIS SUPPURATIVA



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A skin disorder characterized by nodules in the armpit. It appears rarely on buttocks, groin or under breasts. It can affect both sexes, but is more common in females (ages 13 to 16 years).

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Nodules with the following characteristics:

- Nodules are firm, tender and domed.
- Nodules are 1 cm to 3 cm in diameter.
- Larger nodules soften in the center and become painful. When pressed, they feel like an overfilled inner tube.
- Nodules open and drain pus spontaneously.
- Individual nodules (with or without drainage) heal slowly over 10 to 30 days.
- Nodules leave scars.
- Severity of the disorder varies from a few lesions per year to a constant succession of lesions that form as old ones heal. Lesions frequently recur at the same site.

### CAUSES

Hormonal influences that activate the apocrine glands under the arms. Secretions in these glands enlarge the gland. The outlets become blocked, probably by heat, sweat or incomplete gland development. The secretions that are dammed in the glands force sweat and bacteria into surrounding tissue, which becomes infected.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Obesity.
- Exposure to environmental heat and moisture.
- Family history. This disorder is most common in black females.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific preventive measures.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

This disorder may last many years from puberty through the following 10 to 20 years. Symptoms can often be controlled with treatment.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Scarring.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Don't use commercial underarm deodorants.
- Minimize heat and sweating.
- Avoid constrictive clothing and clothing made of synthetic fibers.
- Lose weight, if you are overweight.
- Wash with antibacterial soaps.
- Use soaks to relieve itching and hasten healing. Warm-water soaks are usually more soothing for pain or inflammation. Cool-water soaks feel better for itching.
- Surgery to open and drain abscesses or to remove involved skin may be recommended.

### MEDICATIONS

- Injection of cortisone drugs directly into the lesions.
- Antibiotics to fight infection.
- Hormones to help subdue inflammation.
- Isotretinoin (prescription) has been effective in some patients. This is a potent drug and must be given under a doctor's supervision.
- For minor discomfort, you may use non-prescription drugs such as acetaminophen.

### ACTIVITY

Restrict your activity in hot weather, and avoid hot jobs if possible. Swimming is excellent.

### DIET

No special diet unless you need to lose weight. Obesity is a main risk factor for this disorder.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of hidradenitis suppurativa.
- Lesions don't improve after 5 days of treatment.
- Your temperature rises to 101° F (38.3° C).
- Lesions appear that become soft and seem to have pus, but don't drain spontaneously.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.